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The pragmatics of requests in digital communication: A study of Francophone Cameroonian English speakers' interactions

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Abstract - This study sets out to investigate request strategies used by some Cameroonian francophone speakers of English across major social media platforms including Facebook, WhatsApp, and Messenger to see how these strategies shape digital illocutionary behaviour. Drawing on a corpus of 230 authentic social media posts collected within 2020-2022, the work is grounded on Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) Speech Act Theory. Findings shows that Yes / No questions with 97 occurrences, Wh- questions with 76 occurrences, Enquiry about family or one's health which stands at 56 occurrences and Tag questions used once by the users are the request strategies used on Cameroon social media interactions. This research is an important contribution to the pragmatics of online discourse. It has also increased awareness of Cameroon francophone English in online context.

Keywords: request strategies, francophone cameroonians, social media, speech acts, digital pragmatics

1. Introduction

Social media platforms have fundamentally reshaped everyday communication, compressing the distance between public and private registers and generating new affordances, character limits, emoji, screenshots, group chats that speakers exploit for pragmatic effect (Kietzmann, Kristopher, McCarthy and Silvestre, 2011). The proliferation of social media platforms across sub-Saharan Africa has fundamentally transformed the landscape of human communication, creating new digital arenas in which language use, identity performance, and social negotiation intersect in complex and often unprecedented ways. In Cameroon, a country celebrated for its extraordinary linguistic diversity, with over 280 indigenous languages alongside English and French as official languages and Cameroonian Pidgin English as a widely spoken lingua franca, social media represents a particularly rich site for the study of pragmatic behaviour. Digital communication in this context does not occur in a linguistic vacuum; it is deeply embedded in layers of cultural knowledge, social hierarchy, ethnic affiliation, and communicative norms that have evolved over centuries of multilingual contact.

Requests are among the most face-threatening speech acts a speaker can perform, since they impose on the hearer and constrain their freedom of action (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Requests, as a fundamental category of speech acts, occupy a central position in any communicative system. To request is to impose upon another, to invoke social relationships, to navigate the delicate terrain of face one's public self-image and to demonstrate varying degrees of power, and solidarity. How Francophone Cameroonians formulate requests in digital spaces therefore offers a uniquely revealing window into the sociopragmatic architecture of their

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communicative world. Despite the wealth of scholarship on African languages, on Cameroonian sociolinguistics, and on digital communication more broadly, remarkably little attention has been paid to the specific question of request strategies in Cameroonian social media discourse. This work endeavour addresses that gap.This paper therefore aims at identifying and examining the various request strategies in Cameroon social media platforms. The following research questions will be under scrutiny.

- ✓ What request strategies do Cameroonian francophone English speakers employ on social media?
- ✓ How do these strategies vary across platforms, linguistic codes, and social contexts?

To corroborate with Esambe (2008), the advent of English in Cameroon has been described in the literature as a linguistic accident due to its historical introduction into the country. The first contact of English with Cameroon counts from the 16th century, period within which the first British trade stables were established beside the coastal area. Considering its remote contact, there was a low frequency of English used by local people in their exchange with British traders. British traders gave value to the emergence of Pidgin English that made it possible for them to maintain the contact and social interaction needed for the purpose of trade with the locals (Mesthrie, 2010).

France was known for its infamous assimilation policy and Britain for its indirect rule, known as a policy favouring the use of local languages and local ruling systems. At independence in respectively 1960 for Eastern Cameroon and 1961 for Western Cameroon, the two entities formed a federal state whose hallmark was its dual political and linguistic practices; this state has often been termed in the literature the Cameroons (Mesthrie, 2010; Essossomo, 2013). With respect to the different political dominations undertaken, Eastern as well as Western Cameroon had inherited two distinctive remote languages. The political systems and educational systems were organised through British based system for Anglophone and French based system for Francophone and this continues till date. Nonetheless, the founding fathers of the unitary state aimed to do away with the antagonism inherited from colonisation. Thus, though English had traditionally been the language of people from British Cameroon and French that of those from French Cameroon, they made English and French the official languages of the country with equal status.

French is used in all domains of social life. In education, it is the language of instruction in all French-medium schools; it is taught as a subject in all English-medium schools and competence, it is checked in all public competitive examinations (Kouega, 2019). English therefore found its way through both the Anglophone and the Francophone systems of education, where it has traditionally been taught as a second language (ESL) and a foreign language (EFL) respectively. The position of English in Cameroon is also represented in what Kachru's (1986) tags concentric circles through which he smartly captures the continuing spread of English around the world, making Cameroon an Outer circle English-speaking setting. It therefore has a historical connection with the Queen's language, compared to those expanding circle set-ups among which Iran, Singapore and Rwanda. This setting once had immediate contact with native English (British English for that matter) and English here takes the position of official language. Yet, the emergence and prominence of the World English (WE) framework, pioneered by Kachru (1986) seems to have given legitimacy to the clumsy argument that these features are characteristics of Cameroon English, resulting from a process of nativisation the language has witnessed here. More importantly, it seems to have given strength to dangerous statements like: Immediately a structure is used for communication in a community, it is intelligible and is a norm for interlocutors. The distinction between mistake, error and innovation is spelt out in Kachru (1992), where he points out that innovations are products of creativity in using the language. This might be done in a way slightly or noticeably different from what usually obtains in mother-tongue varieties.

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From the above development, the inception of English in Cameroon and its position today is clearly explained by the authors cited in this portion of the work. Cameroon is considered as an outer circle English-speaking setting with distinctive remarks at the levels of lexes, phonology, morphology as well as semantics for CamE. Yet, what is meant as the status of English spoken in the francophone Cameroon is another form of English standing for Cameroon Francophone English (henceforth CamFE) developed by Kouega (2017). Instead of looking at the semantics, lexicon, morphology or phonology of the Francophone English recorded in the various SM platforms, this work will simply use the population for the purpose of pragmatic analysis of request strategies.

Authors who have been interested in the speech acts of requests are many. Shams and Afghari (2011 addressed the comprehension of indirect request speech act used by Iranian people in daily communication. The aim of study was to find out if different cultural backgrounds and the gender of the speakers affect the comprehension of the indirect request of speech act. For data collection, a questionnaire was administered to 60 randomly-selected ordinary people from different social classes and with different educational levels in Gachsaran and Farokhshahr, Iran. Results pointed out that the participants in the research try to use indirect request rather than direct form, regardless of culture. Likewise, Sulistyowati (2012) studied the types of request and strategies of request based on Trosborg's theory and respond to request based on Tsui's theory. The results showed that there are four types of request by the main character in 'The Pursuit of Happiness'. They are unconventionally indirect request, conventionally indirect request (hearer-based), conventionally indirect request (speaker-based) and direct request. In addition, there are seven strategies of request employed by the character in the movie. They are hints, questioning hearer's ability or willingness, suggestory formulae, statement of speaker's need and demand, statement of obligation and the imperative. Besides, there are three kinds of responses to request uttered by the main character in the movie. They are positive responding act to request, negative responding act to request and temporization.

Furthermore, Sufyan, Katja and Madeline (2013) examined the performance of request pragma-linguistically, socio-pragmatically and in relation to culture in Palestinian Arabic (PA) and British English (BE). A discourse completion task was used for data collection. It was administered to Palestinians living in Palestine and speaking Palestinian Arabic at the Arab-American University (AAUJ) as well as British living in the UK and speaking British English at Lancaster University and the University of Cumbria. The corpus formed 60 native speakers of Palestinian Arabic and 88 native speakers of British English. The findings revealed that the languages are significantly different in the use of direct strategies and conventionally indirect strategies. In addition, the factors of status, distance, and degree of imposition influence the performance of request in both languages, however to a larger extent in PA.

Moreover, Mochamad (2015) investigated speech act of requests as reflected in the film entitled *Office Space* through a descriptive qualitative and quantitative research in which visual analysis was used to interpret and analyse the data. The research revealed that there are four types of request used by the characters in *Office Space*. They are unconventionally indirect request, conventionally indirect request (hearer-oriented condition), conventionally indirect request (speaker-oriented condition), and direct request. In the application of the types of request, the characters in *Office Space* mostly use conventionally indirect request (hearer-based condition) because the hearer is in the position of controlling whether he/she will comply the request or not. It was also shown that there are seven strategies employed by the characters in *Office Space*. They are giving hints, questioning hearer's ability and willingness, giving suggestions, giving statements of speaker`s wishes and desires, giving statements of speaker's needs and demands, giving statements of obligations and necessities, and giving imperatives. The characters in *Office Space* mainly use the strategy of questioning hearer's ability and willingness because they often make their request indirectly in the form of question since the condition of this strategy refers to the hearer's capacity to perform the desired act.

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Besides, Thuruvan and MD Yunus (2017) examined the speech act of request in the ESL Classroom with the aim of identifying the types of request strategies used by the participants in making requests and see the factors influencing their choice of strategies. The primary method of data collection was the observation of naturally occurring interaction in the English language classroom and the administration of discourse completion tests (DCT) to students and two language teachers of a rural secondary school in Kedah. Observational data on classroom interaction was collected through audio recordings, as well as recording naturally occurring data using the pen and paper method. Findings indicated that students seem to be less polite when speaking to peers and more polite when speaking to teachers, while teachers speak less politely to students as they have more power.

Faissam and Apuge (2021) examined the types of requests in CamFE, their structure, as well as the lexical and syntactic features. Data were collected through Discourse Completion Test (DCT) administered from some 40 students in the Department of English Language and Literature of the University of Maroua. The corpus comprised 240 request utterances . They used the coding scheme of the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realisation Patterns propounded by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) to analyse data. Findings reveal that CamFE speakers have six types of request content structures established as S1, S2, S3, S4, S5 and S6. The most preferred request strategy is the reference to preparatory conditions technique (81.67%) followed by the mood derivable technique (10%).

In the same light, Chintawidy and Sartini (2022) anlysed and compared request strategies and politeness of two groups of native speakers from two different ethnic groups in Indonesia that is, Javanese and Sudanese. The data were collected by using Discourse Completion Task (DCT) with 60 participants from 30 Javanese (East Java) and 30 Sudanese (West Java) speakers. The results of their study indicated that Direct Strategy in the form of mood derivable and Conventionally Indirect Strategy in the form of query preparatory are two request strategies that are mainly employed by both Javanese and Sudanese speakers. In particular, Javanese speakers employ a more Direct Strategy than Sudanese speakers. However, the patterns of request strategies employed by Javanese and Sudanese speakers in most social contexts are similar.

Wu (2022) investigated request strategies in BELF Emails. The aim was to analyse the emails' request strategy pattern and interprets BELF email writers' choices on different request strategies from the perspectives of contextual, channel and communicator factors. Data was drawn from the authentic English business emails written by BELF speakers as research. The corpus includes 415 business emails, containing 30885 words in total and written in English from 2015 to 2018 by non-native speakers in companies carrying out international transactions from Asian countries as well as European countries, including China, Japan, India, Russia, Italy and Germany. The emails have a wide range from ordering, meeting arrangement to document transmission and other business-related activities. The findings from the analysis revealed that mood derivable which one of the direct strategies, is the most commonly used request strategy in BELF emails. It was followed by query preparatory under the category of conventionally indirect request strategies and mild hint under the category of non-conventionally indirect request strategy is hardly found. It was also found that BELF email writers' frequent choices on direct request strategies (71.1%) and conventionally indirect request strategies (26%) may result from social power, the nature of BELF language and email as well as communicators' focus on information content, lack of English proficiency and their mother tongue's impact.

Li (2023) examined the use of second language (L2) request strategies by a single English major in China. The study adopted audio-record to collect the informant's conversational data through WeChat. Results demonstrated that the participant was tempted to use conventionally indirect requests and more external modification devices than internal ones in all the role-plays. In addition, the participant's inappropriate adoption of direct requests in the first and third role-plays and written responses to the follow up survey questions suggested that he was not conscious of the contextual variables when performing requests.

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Recent studies show that request strategies have increasingly been examined from a socio-pragmatic, cross-cultural, and digitally mediated perspective. Research on Cameroon French highlights that requests and refusals are influenced by social relationships, contextual factors, and culturally specific pragmatic norms. Farenkia's studies demonstrate that request realization and responses to requests in Cameroon French involve considerable socio-pragmatic variation, showing the importance of examining pragmatic practices within the local sociolinguistic context (Farenkia, 2023, 2024).

The growing use of digital communication has also expanded research on requests beyond face-to-face interaction. Studies of WhatsApp, email, and other computer-mediated contexts indicate that learners' request strategies are shaped by interactional competence, politeness, deontic expressions, power relations, gender, language background, and proficiency. Digital environments may provide new opportunities for pragmatic learning while simultaneously creating challenges because written online interaction combines characteristics of spoken and written communication (Malabarba, 2022; Hofweber & Jaworska, 2022; Qin et al., 2024; Kulyagina & Sánchez-Hernández, 2026).

Cross-cultural and interlanguage research further demonstrates that learners' choices of request strategies are strongly affected by their first-language background and developing pragmatic competence. Research involving German, Greek, Polish, Russian, Chinese, Saudi, Indonesian, and other language learners shows differences in directness, request perspective, politeness, and the use of mitigating devices. These findings suggest that successful request production requires not only grammatical competence but also an understanding of contextual and sociocultural norms (Ogiermann & Bella, 2020; Li, 2023; Alsalem, 2024; Cahyaningrum et al., 2025).

Research in African contexts also emphasizes the role of local varieties of English and other languages in shaping pragmatic behaviour. Studies of Nigerian English and Igbo English, for example, demonstrate that speakers employ culturally influenced politeness and request strategies. Similarly, research on Cameroon Pidgin English indicates that requests can take distinctive forms reflecting the communicative practices of the local speech community (Dozie et al., 2022; Kouega, 2019; Nwokolo et al., 2026).

The literature indicates that requests should be understood as context-dependent speech acts influenced by culture, social relationships, power, gender, language background, and the communication medium. However, there remains a need for further research combining Cameroon's multilingual and multicultural context with emerging forms of digital communication. Such research could provide a clearer understanding of how Cameroonian speakers, particularly learners and young users, negotiate politeness, directness, and pragmatic meaning when making requests in online environments (Farenkia, 2023; Tabe & Dieudonné, 2026; Safont, 2023; Peng & Lei, 2025; Jarrah et al., 2026).

It is found from the forgone literature that interest was related to cultural background and gender, request and politeness as well as second language and request. These studies purposively used discourse completion, observation, questionnaire, film, recording or business emails for data collection. The current research considers the natural occurring requests in Cameroon social media platforms by the collection of data through screenshots.

The primary theoretical framework for this study is Speech Act Theory as developed by Austin (1962) in his landmark work How to Do Things with Words and subsequently elaborated by Searle (1969). Austin's fundamental insight was that utterances do not merely describe or report states of affairs but perform actions in the world. He distinguished between constative utterances, which describe or state facts and can be evaluated as true or false and performative utterances , which perform an action by the very act of being uttered. Austin further developed a three-part analysis of speech acts: the locutionary act (the act of saying something with a particular meaning), the illocutionary act (the act performed in saying something, such as promising, warning, requesting or thanking), and the perlocutionary act (the effect achieved on the hearer as a result of the utterance). For the analysis of request, the illocutionary dimension is

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primary: what is the speaker doing in producing this utterance? The answer, in the case of request, is that the speaker wish to find out something from the hearer.

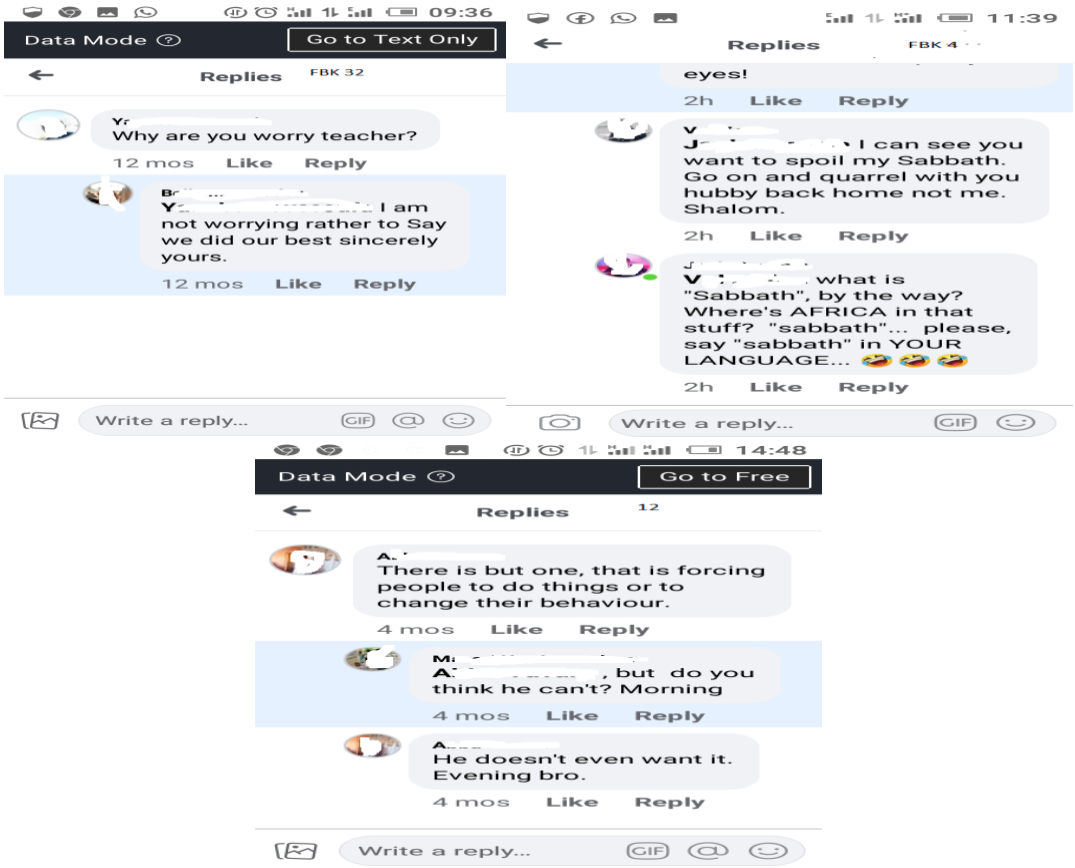
Searle's (1969) taxonomy of speech acts classifies illocutionary acts into five categories: representatives (asserting, claiming, reporting), directives (requesting, commanding, questioning), commissives (promising, offering, threatening), expressives (thanking, apologising, congratulating, condoling), and declarations (pronouncements that immediately change institutional reality, such as verdicts or appointments). Thanking falls unambiguously within the category of expressives, which Searle defines as speech acts whose illocutionary point is to express the psychological state specified in the sincerity condition with respect to the state of affairs specified in the propositional content. For this study, Speech Act Theory provides the analytical tools to identify and classify request utterances in the corpus to examine the relationship between the form and the function of request in different interactional contexts. The theory's emphasis on the social and institutional dimensions of speech acts is particularly useful for understanding how requesting operates as a socially meaningful act that both reflects and reinforces the relational dynamics of Cameroonian social media communities.

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

This work uses a mixed-methods approach, incorporating qualitative and quantitative research design. The analysis with quantitative frequency provides both and in-depth understanding of request strategies and a systematic overview of the distribution of these strategies within the overall data collected from Cameroonian social networking sites. A smartphone was used to elicitate data through screenshots grounded on the francophone Cameroonian speakers of English posts from Messenger, WhatsApp and Meta from 2020 to 2022. The corpus comprises 230 screenshots. The FBK and WHAP data are selected from group chats among colleagues on one hand, and among friends on the other hand. It also includes individuals' chats and chats between the researcher and colleagues on MSG. They are reached for the purpose of this study through WhatsApp platforms. The researcher selected the text messages in which the features of request strategies are found before snapping them. The collection and analysis of social media data raises important ethical questions regarding privacy, consent, and the potential for harm to participants. All data were collected from publicly accessible posts and accounts, and no private messages or restricted content was accessed. User names and identifying information were coded in all excerpts presented in the analysis as follows: WhatsApp (WHAP 01 to WHAP 113), Facebook (FBK 01 to FBK 76) and Messenger (MSG 01 to MSG 41). Figure 1 proffers some sample of data collected.

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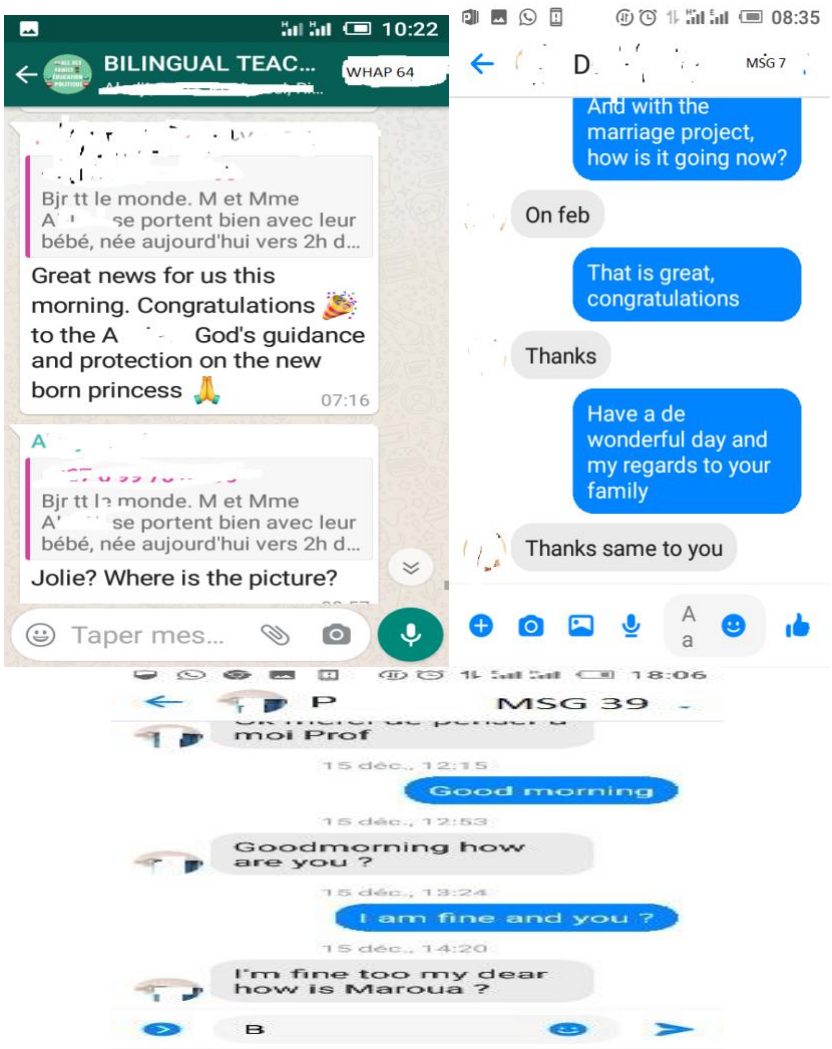


Figure 1: Sample of screenshots

The screenshots above contain types of request strategies. This show that the data obtained from the interactants are purely authentic. The primary data in this work include 230 screenshots. More data are found in the appendix.

2.2 Data Analysis

A request is a directive speech act used by a speaker with the intention of getting the hearer to do something (Searle, 1976). In addition to Searlean view, one can affirm that a request appears often to be enquiring about one's or family health, seeking to find out any missing information which we are not aware of or looking for the location of the hearer(s). To perform the request strategy, there are different forms used. In this respect, those that are found among francophone Cameroonian speakers of English are amongst others wh-questions, yes or no questions, enquiry about one's or family health, requesting with modals (can/could/should) and tag questions.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Results

Table 1 below shows the distribution of requesting strategies displayed in Cameroon social networks platforms under study as well their frequencies.

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Table 1: Distribution of requesting strategies

N°	Requesting strategy	Number of examples	Percentage
1	Yes / No questions	97	42.18%
2	Wh- questions	76	33.04%
3	Enquiry about family or one's health	56	24.35%
4	Tag questions	01	0.43%
	Total	**230**	**100%**

In this Table 1, it is seen that the overall total of requesting strategy is 230 occurrences. The participants strongly favoured Yes or no question as it is used 97 times. This could be explained through the fact that the hearers are mostly asked questions that irreverssibly required a yes or no answers. Wh-question is the second alternative with 76 occurrences. Regarding the enquiry about one's or family health, statistics show that it has 56 instances. Tag question is the least form of requesting strategy used once. These requesting strategies are discussed in greater detail below.

3.1.1 Wh-questions

In this subsection, the wh-question is presented as one of the requesting strategies found in the three platforms (WhatsApp, Facebook and Messenger) used by the informants in this study. Pragmatically, wh-questions serve several communicative functions. For instance, it is used to ask for information which is unknown but desired by the speaker and is assumed to be known by the addressee. Moreover, the speaker needs to have knowledge about when such questions are proper to use in a discourse/conversational setting (Searle, 1969). The pragmatic function of rising wh-question or open interrogative is shown to be a generalisation of the eco-question pattern which allows a range of answers. Such type of questions are used for clear purposes as they can be shown through instances registered in this work. Let's consider the following:

(1) a)… *What edition of the bilingualism day are we celebrating this year?*
b) it is the 20th edition of national bilingualism day and 17th edition of national bilingualism week. Taken somewhere (WHAP 1-2021-male)
(2) *About what please? I* am lost (WHAP 17-2021-male)
(3) *what is your mafa name?* (FBK 18-2022-male)
(4) a) it is already February, *what is the programme?*
b) next month oohh, he was not feeling fine oohhh (MSG 13-2020-males)
(5) does a dwarf man drink alcohol now? *In which occasion my brother?* (FBK 11-2020-male)

From the above conversations, it is crystal clear that the speakers are seeking to get either information or direction which they are not aware of. To satisfy their curiosity, they used wh-question which may have an indefinite or infinite number of direct answers. In (1), the speaker does not have an idea about the theme of the ongoing bilingualism for the year 2021 and that he announces his plea to his colleagues in the group in order to get a help. In (2), the speaker does not even know the subject of the conversation in the group, that is an expression such as 'about what please' shows his surprise and then he places a demand to find it out. In (24a), the utterance has an underlying pragmatic function related to information seeking about events. It is assumed that there was an antecedent conversation between the interlocutors about an event which was supposed to take place in the month of February. So, in other to avoid missing the event, the speaker reminded the hearer that it is already the period during which the event is supposed to happen as scheduled. Moreover, it is worth to note that wh-question can also target purely physical locations.

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The following are some instances:

(6) a) I wish you a very quick recovery brother. *Where are you presently*?
b) Thank I am in Maroua (WHAP 37-2021-male)
(7) I don't have it bro, I cannot read it. *Where are my female colleagues of this house ohhhh?* =(WHAP 51-2022-male)
(8) a) My regards to all the members of this house
b) you are welcome PhD I don't feel G.., P…, K…, *where are they?* (WHAP 49-2021-males)

The utterances above account for information seeking for location. The speakers are looking for the heare(s) current position. The conversational situation shows that the form of request here is two way, that is, in one hand the hearers are in indirect contact with the speakers as the case of example (6) and in the other hand, the hearers are absent in the speakers' environment at the moment where the utterance is being performed. Nonetheless, example (7) is a bit ambiguous in such a way that the analysis is twofold: an alternative where the hearers are present at the moment where the utterance is being performed or completely absent. In addition to seeking information about the hearers' location, wh-question can be used to express the cause of certain circumstances or motivations. Consider the following:

(9) a) ... So *our* strike is on campus and during school hours
b) *why will they do so? What have the teachers done?* (WHAP 28-2022-male)
(10) a) *What is wrong with him?*
b) he was not feeling oohh
a) ok quick recovery to him (MSG 2-2022-male/female)
(11) a) Nice picture
b) what is nice on that picture bro? Instead u encourage u'r big brother for that great achievement u just appreciate the picture. *What happened with u bro?* (FBK 22-2021-males)

The above occurrences unveil that their pragmatic function is attracting the hearers' attention so as to find out the cause of their condition as in (9) 'What have the teachers done?', (10a) 'What is wrong with him?', (11) 'What happened with u bro?' or motivation (9) 'why will they do so?'. Furthermore, wh-question might be used to look for improvement. See the excerpts below:

(12) *what could we do?* (FBK 11-2021-male)
(13) *what hope do I have for my future?* (FBK 19-2020-male)
(14) a) whom are you talking to? He doesn't change because moral decadence is in his gene and blood. If Jesus doesn't wash *it* away, *how can he change?*
b) *they* are always praying but *I* don't know who (FBK 6-2020-males)

The prevalence of wh-questions in these instances corresponds to speakers' current conditions. The questions raised undoubtedly signal the information that they are tired about these conditions and that being conscious, they are eager to look for ways out, but it might seem difficult or impossible to find the solution 'what could we do?'. The rhetorical questions 'what hope do I have for my future?' and 'how can he change?' stress the fact that there is a trace of lack or little hope for change to come. The next section presents and analyses yes or no question strategy in Cameroon social media.

3.1.2 Yes or No questions

Yes or no questions are the types of question-responses that use the auxiliary verb 'be', 'have' or the modals. Their occurrences in the conversations among the informants show the positive or

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the negative aspects of certain circumstances around them. Consider the following instances with modal auxiliaries (do, does, would, did):

(15) a) You can't care about the message I sent you hein. Ok as I am not as tall as you, you ignore my SMS
b) can't see it. Laughter we always advice you to get tall but you refuse. *Do you see the effect now?* (WHAP 41-2021-female/male)
(16) a) How are *you* J…
b) Fine too. How are studies? *Did you finish the continuous assessment?* (WHAP 8-2021-male)
(17) a) we understand just that we are too busy. We shall reply later
b) Good morning dear colleagues. Dear admin *would you mind saving this number in our forum?* (WHAP 23-2022-males)
(18) Good morning sir I totally agree with you. *But does conservation official fit in the following sentence?* I think ….is excellent as it preserves our cultural heritage (WHAP 34-2022-male)

In the examples (16) and (17) utterances, it is pragmatically difficult or even impossible for a reader to know whether the answer is no or yes for each of the examples. However, to know them, one should be in the same environment in which the conversation was going on and so being fully a participant observer. Nonetheless, the example (15) clearly unveils an obvious answer which will be naturally 'yes' because the nature of the question itself shows that the hearer has been given an advice and then the question raised here is consequent to her refusal of that piece of advice. Furthermore, the example (18) shows that there could be an evidence to the answer yes or no depending on the following sentences to which the question is directed by the speaker. Other forms of yes or no questions with modals (can, could) include the following:

(19) a) Hello
b) good evening everyone
c) *can somebody help me with a sample of an article*?
d) Good evening C… (WHAP 3-2022-male)
(20) a) Morning sir, *please could you help me with quiz questions on bilingualism day*?
b) good morning, I think it is too late to do something now (WHAP 26-2022-males)
(21) good morning dear mates, *can anybody help me with the venue, time and timetable of the seminar that begins tomorrow? Please* (WHAP 30-2021-male)
(22) Good morning dear colleagues, *can someone help me with the contacts of E*… urgent please (WHAP 32)

From these excerpts with modals 'can' and 'could', it is shown that the messages conveyed by the speakers are clear, simple and do not need previous knowledge of their worries within an immediate context for their interpretation. However, the reactions may be diverse ranging from no answer, uncertainty, sending what is asked without any other words or lack of interest. Therefore, their pragmatic roles are related to getting the readers to find the answer in the questions. Apart from using modals, it has also been found that the auxiliary verbs are also used for a yes or no question in Cameroon social media. Look at the following:

(23) …There is no way we can blame B… for it. *Have we elected him or any position in relation to trade union?* No, we should even stop talking of betrayal, whom has he betrayed? *Have you invested him with any mission that he failed to fulfill?...* (WHAP 21-2022-male)
(24) good evening in this house. *Are we supposed to pay school fee for this seminar?* (WHAP 185-2021-male)
(25) *Are you still in Gabaraye?* (WHAP 9-2021-male)
(26) a) Good morning everyone

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b) Morning Mr H… *are yu at school?*
a) don't be late to school please (WHAP 18-2022-female)
(27) a) congratulations sir
b) *is she alone bro?* (FBK 10-2020-males)
(28) *is this mafa girl?* (FBK 13-2022-male)

From the above examples (23) to (27), the auxiliary verbs are directly followed by personal pronouns. This implies that the question is in between two interlocutors and the hearer is therefore supposed to provide an answer which will clear out doubt or unawareness on behalf of the speaker. In example (23), it is assumed that the question was raised about a complaint by some of the informants in the group. The speaker is justifying the fact that one should not normally murmur about one of their colleague's deviance or behaviour towards their collective interests because according to him, that colleague carried out an action without any opinion or consultation of others and which action are not welcomed by others. In the examples (25) and (26), the addresser wants to find out the position or the place of the addressees at the very moment where they asked them question. In examples (27) and (28), it is seen that the conversation is going on between two persons about another person which is in the same environment at the moment when the sentences are uttered. The following section will discuss the enquiry about one's or family health.

3.1.3 Enquiry about family or one's health and tag question

In every cultural heritage, nuclear or broad family is a relevant token of that culture. The enquiry about one's family is a ritual politeness in pragmatics. In other words, most of the interlocutors share information about their individual families when they meet. This speech act behaviour is irreversible in all the cultural spheres. Consider the following excerpts:

(29) a) *how is your family?*
b) my family is fine that's great … (MSG 2-2021-males)
(30) a) good morning prof
b) *how is the family?* (MSG 4-2020-males)
(31) a) Good afternoon
b) Good afternoon my father, *how are madame and homonym?*
a) They are fine (WHAP 25-2021-males)
(32) a) Good morning brother, *how far?*
b) Morning my dear brother, I am fine, *what about you and your family?* (MSG 12-2022-males)
(33) a) good morning, *how are you doing brother and your family?*
b) hello brother, *I am fine and you?* I am also fine thanks (WHAP 36-2022- males)

These instances clearly show that a family plays a vital role in any speech community. Every human being cannot trace his/her identity out of his/her own family. That is why when two people meet, they will enquire information about each other's family members' state. It is worth to know that this form of cultural value is used to enhance solidarity, love and unity among people. There are two ways of asking someone's family members' health. In one hand, the addresser can directly address the case of the addressee's family when they meet. This explicitly presupposes that the speaker assumes the hearer to be in good health since he/she is in front of him/her at the moment they are interacting. This falls in line with examples (29) and (30). On the other hand, the addresser includes the addressee and his/her family at once. This implicitly presupposes that the speaker is not sure if the hearer is in good health despite the fact that they are face to face. Take for instance the utterances (31b', (32b) and (33a). In addition, the enquiry can be about one's health. Let's consider the following excerpts:

(34) a) B… how are you?
b) am fine and you?

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a) I am well (MSG 9-2022-males)
(35) a) Good evening dear
b) good evening bro *how are you doing?*
a) I am doing well oh (MSG 14-2022-males)
(36) a) Good morning great lady. *How are you feeling this morning?*
b) Good morning *I* am quite well and you?
a) *I*'m ok, my junior sister. (WHAP 43-2022-male/female)
(37) a) hello
b) hello S…
a) *it* has been so long
b) *indeed how are you doing?* … (MSG 8-2021-male/female)

It can be deduced from the above examples that the interlocutors' discussion is focused only on themselves. The name of the family or any other acquaintance is not mentioned by both interactants. All of these examples inform the reader that there is a close relationship between the informants and that their interest at the moment of their conversation is not extended to others. The next section describes another form of request analysing the role of tag question.

Tag question is also found under request strategy in Cameroon social media. This form is used only once in the data collected, but it is relevant in this analysis. See the example that is follows:

(38) a) unbelievable
b) *human being isn't he?*
c) *it*'s too hard to believe your person is gone when love is at the centre. So no further question (FBK 1-2020-males)

From the above example, it consists of putting forward a statement and inviting reader's confirmation. It is worth to notice that the answer is in reality obvious, but for the purpose of seeking the addressee's opinion about it and for clarity or verification's sake, the addresser is showing that he is not the only one to see what is not meant to be or to occur as far as human being is concerned through the expression of surprise 'unbelievable'.

It is shown from the various analysis of the types of request that CamFE speakers employ wh-questions for clear either information or direction. They also use yes or no questions with modals or the verb 'to be' to mean their intentions obviously to the audience. Their practice of enquiring about someone's health or family indicate their act of politeness toward the hearer(s). The next section is related to the analysis of the forms of suggestion among Cameroonian francophone speakers of English.

4. Conclusion

This work has attempted to investigate the types of request strategies found in Cameroon social media platforms from 2020 to 2022. It draws on a corpus of 230 digital interactions collected from Facebook, WhatsApp, and Messenger. The work is grounded on Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) Speech Act Theory. Results show that Yes/No questions with 97 occurrences, Wh-questions with 76 occurrences, Enquiry about family or one's health which stands at 56 occurrences and Tag questions used once by the informants were prevalent in Cameroon social media. From the pragmatic perspective, findings in this paper have contributed to knowledge in the empirical study of Africa in general and Cameroon in particular in digital pragmatics field. The study has some shorthcomings that suggest productive directions for further research. The corpus, while substantial, undoutedly captures only a partial and selected slice of Cameroonian digital communication. Further research might extend the corpus to include additional platforms and a wider range of linguistic varieties and regional contexts. Experimental methods, including

Discourse Completion Tasks administered to Cameroonian social media users, might complement the naturalistic corpus approach adopted here by providing controlled comparisons of strategy selection across demographic groups and social variables

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